FALSE ALARM REDUCTION PROGRAM

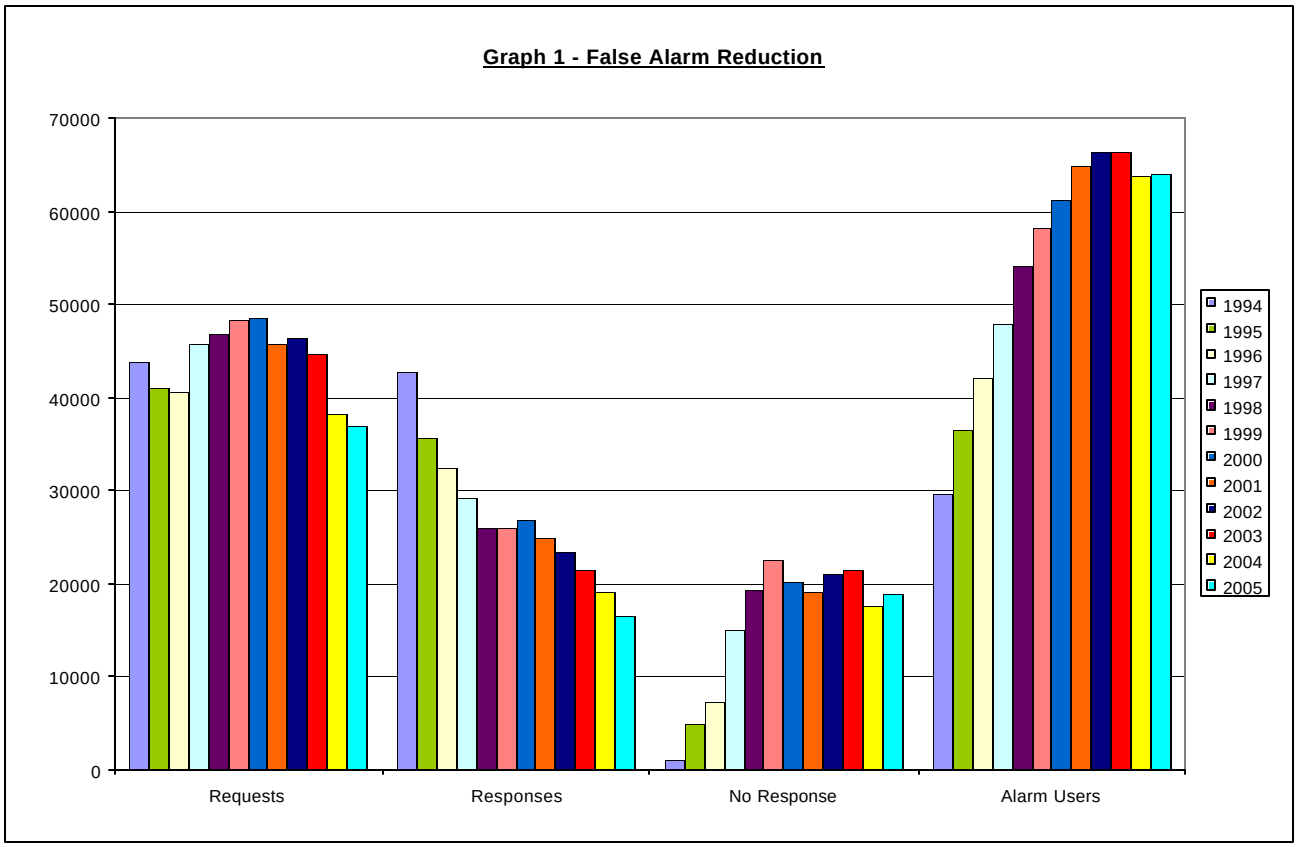
ANNUAL REPORT

FOR YEAR ENDING 2005

False Alarm Reduction

The False Alarm Reduction Section (FARS) of the Montgomery County Department of Police completed its tenth year of enforcement under the amended Chapter 3A, Alarms, of the Montgomery County Code. The FARS reports that there was an additional extraordinary decrease in the incidence of false alarms between 2004 and 2005, despite an increase of 6,245 new alarm users. The FARS also engaged in new community outreach projects, training of law enforcement and alarm industry professionals, participated in a nationwide study on alarm management programs, and continued their outstanding enforcement efforts.

In calendar year 2005, false alarms to which police officers were required to respond were reduced by an additional 14.3%, which brings the total to a full 61.6% reduction in false alarms since enforcement of the False Alarm Reduction Program began in earnest in March 1995. Additionally, police officers responded to 26,378 *less* alarm calls in 2005 over 1994. These statistics, coupled with a 115% increase in the number of registered alarm users over the same time period, clearly shows that substantial and *sustained* false alarm reduction is still being achieved even after ten years and that the alarm law is an excellent tool in reducing false alarms and positively changing alarm user and alarm business behavior. It is also a testament to a well-written, enforceable law and a highly dedicated and talented FARS staff.



Graph 1 – False Alarm Reduction, provides information on the number of *requests* for dispatch vs. *actual responses* (dispatched). If the false alarm reduction program is successful, the responses should continue to decrease relative to the number of total alarm users, and this fact is evident in the graph. The graph also provides information on calls where no response was made, as well as the total number of alarm users. The number of actual alarm calls to which police officers respond has continued to decrease. Police responded to only 16,443 of the total 36,998 requests made, or 44.4%. There were a total of 18,986 alarm activations to which the police were not required to respond in 2005.

Additionally, the number of *requests for dispatch* is at a new all-time low. In 2005, there were a total of 36,998 requests for dispatch to alarm activations, which is down for the second year in a row. Requests for dispatch remained fairly static between 1994 and 2003 and results were measured in how many *less* responses police officers were required to make. While this is still the most important measure of the success of the program, 2005 marked the second year running where a decrease in the number of requests for dispatch was achieved, which continues to have far-reaching benefits for the Police Department beyond savings measured in police officer time. Less actual alarm calls into our Emergency Communications Center means time recovered for Police Telecommunicators to handle other requests for service from Montgomery County citizens. This is an extremely positive measure, which is directly attributable to the alarm industry's continued Enhanced Call Verification (ECV) initiative.

Chapter 3A, Alarms, of the Montgomery County Code requires alarm companies to attempt to verify the validity of an alarm signal *prior* to requesting police dispatch. This attempted verification generally requires one telephone call be made to the site to determine the cause of the alarm signal. Last year, some alarm companies in Montgomery County voluntarily instituted Enhanced Call Verification in which they make the initial call to the site, and if unable to reach a responsible party, make at least one additional telephone call to another phone number, usually the customer's cell phone. This voluntary initiative continued to show positive effects in 2005 further reducing the number of actual calls for service for alarm activations into our 9-1-1 center.

Absent enforcement of the alarm statute, coupled with an overall increase in alarm users, one would expect that the actual dispatches to alarm activations would increase substantially, or at least at the same rate of growth. **However, actual responses to alarm activations were reduced by an additional 14.3% between 2004 and 2005.**

In 1994, Montgomery County police officers responded on 97.5% of all requests for dispatch (43,936 requests for dispatch with 42,821 actual responses). However, in 2005, police officers responded to only 44.4% of all requests for dispatch (36,998 requests for dispatch with only 16,443 actual responses). Part of the reason for this discrepancy in requests for dispatch vs. actual response is due to the requirement that an alarm company cancel a police response when it is determined that an alarm activation is false. This is achieved through telephone or other electronic verification with the alarm user at the time of alarm system activation. The high number of non-responses (18,986) was due, in part, to that required cancellation by alarm companies. The higher the number of cancellations, the better the job the alarm companies are doing of reducing the number of false alarms to which police officers respond. In 2005, alarm companies cancelled 8,780 requests for dispatch, which represents 23.7% of the total requests for dispatch. These cancellations provide officers with more time to engage in other more critical law enforcement related activities and community policing initiatives.

The FARS also continued its strict enforcement of all requirements for requesting dispatch, including providing the correct alarm user registration and alarm business license numbers. Police officers were not dispatched when an alarm business failed to provide all of the required information to Emergency Communications Center call-takers. Nor were police dispatched if an alarm user was in a violation status for

failure to register, failure to pay a false alarm response fee or failure to upgrade the alarm system when required to do so. The legally mandated non-response provisions of the alarm law resulted in only 2,492 requests for dispatch that were denied as a result of the violation status of the alarm user or alarm business. This represents less than 10% of the total requests for alarm dispatch. The FARS will continue to work to reduce this percentage to negligible numbers.

Graph 2 and Chart 1 – Requests for Dispatch vs. Actual Responses depict the difference between the requests for dispatch and the actual responses since 1994. As stated previously, requests for dispatch in 2005 continued to decline. The actual responses (16,443) to requests also continued its downward trend. This, coupled with 6, 245 new alarm users, is incredibly positive and demonstrates the effectiveness of Montgomery County's alarm law.

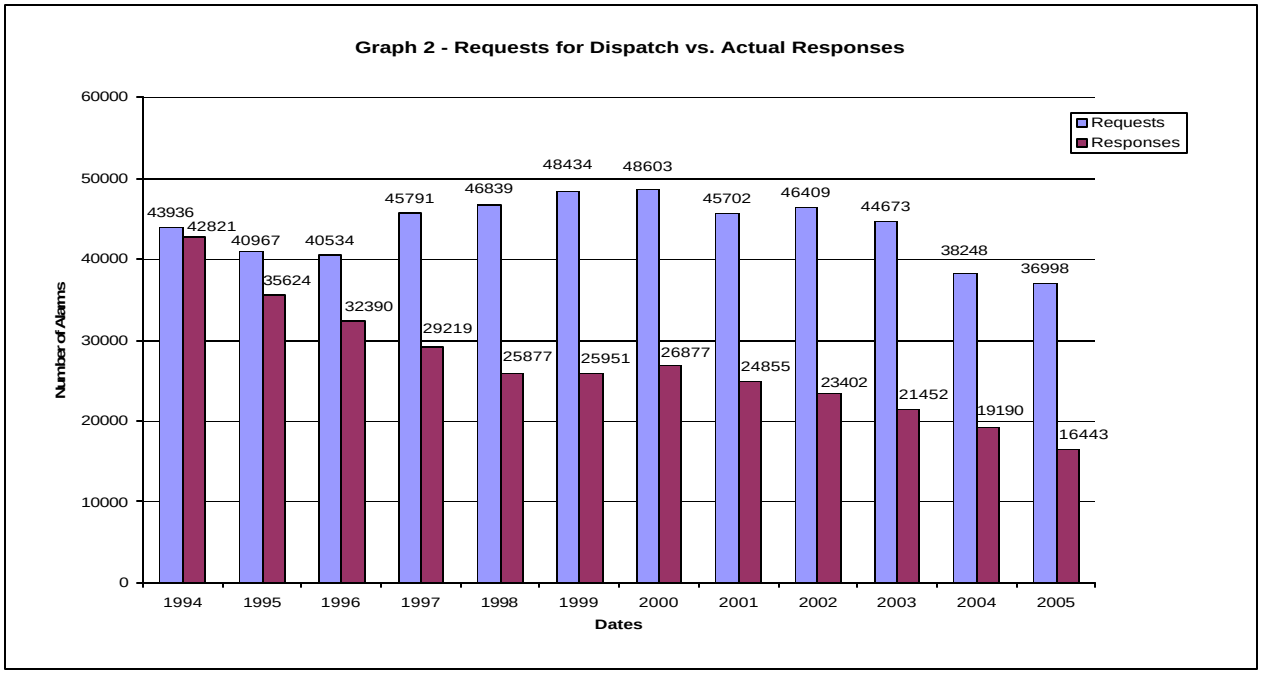


Chart 1 – Requests for Dispatch vs. Actual Responses

Year	Requests for Dispatch	Actual Responses	Percentage of Total Calls Responded To
1994	43,936	42,821	97.5%
1995	40,967	35,624	87.0%
1996	40,534	32,390	79.9%
1997	45,791	29,219	63.8%
1998	46,839	25,877	55.3%
1999	48,434	25,951	53.9%
2000	48,603	26,877	55.3%
2001	45,702	24,855	54.4%
2002	46,409	23,402	50.5%
2003	44,673	21,452	52.0%
2004	38,248	19,190	49.8%
2005	36,998	16,443	44.4%

The false alarm dispatch rate is perhaps the truest measure of false alarm reduction, as it calculates the number of false alarm dispatches relative to the total number of alarm users. The false alarm dispatch rate is the only rate, which takes into account the growth of the alarm user base. **The Security Industry Alarm Coalition (SIAC), which represents the four major alarm industry associations in North America, states that Montgomery County has the lowest reported residential, commercial and combined false alarm dispatch rates of any jurisdiction in the country.** The residential false alarm dispatch rate decreased once again in 2005 to .18. This means that overall, residential alarm users experience less than one false alarm every five years, which is a truly remarkable statistic. The commercial false alarm dispatch rate for 2005 dropped to an all-time low of .86. Combined residential and commercial false alarm dispatch rates fell to an all-time low of .26 and is the lowest combined reported dispatch rate in the entire country.

When the dispatch rates are as low as they are in Montgomery County, even a .1% decline reflects a significant reduction. However, both residential and commercial dispatch rates dropped a full .3%. The combined dispatch rate has been reduced 117% since 1994 through the incredible dedication of the FARS staff, and a well written, enforced alarm ordinance.

Chart 2 – False Alarm Dispatch Rates

Year	Residential	Commercial	Combined
1994	N/A	N/A	1.43
1995	.66	2.29	.98
1996	.54	1.82	.78
1997	.45	1.32	.61
1998	.36	1.06	.48
1999	.35	1.04	.44
2000	.32	1.09	.44
2001	.28	.98	.38
2002	.25	.94	.35
2003	.23	.88	.32
2004	.21	.89	.30
2005	.18	.86	.26

Nationwide statistics often reveal reduction in false alarms for the first several years after enactment and enforcement of a false alarm reduction ordinance begins. However, after the first few years, the numbers generally either level off with no further reduction or actually start to increase. Since the Montgomery County false alarm reduction program has been in effect, it has consistently reduced the false alarm dispatch rate (with the exception of 2000, which remained constant overall) and has done so for a full ten years. Few, if any, other jurisdictions can boast such a phenomenal success rate.

Commercial false alarm dispatch rates have been reported as high as 4.0 and residential false alarm dispatch rates as high as 1.0 or above. A dispatch rate of 4.0 means that *every* alarm user has four actual responses *every* year. Using 2005 statistics, that would equate to 35,500 actual responses to alarm activations for *commercial alarm users alone*; a figure more than double over the *total* responses for residential and commercial alarm users *combined* in 20054.

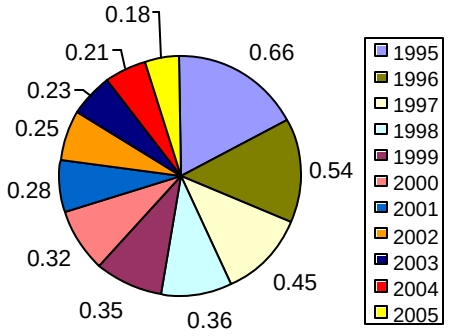
Assuming Montgomery County's dispatch rate would have risen a modest amount to 2.0 without enforcement of the alarm law, police officers would have actually responded to 127,940 false alarm activations in 2005, which would represent a *778% increase* in response to false alarms. At $90 per dispatch,

those 127,940 alarm activations would require approximately 41 police officers to do absolutely nothing but respond to burglar alarms at a staggering cost of $11,514,600. This is clearly a cost that no local jurisdiction can absorb.

The following pie charts (Graphs 3, 4 and 5) graphically depict the significant reductions in residential, non-residential and combined false alarm dispatch rates over the ten year enforcement period.

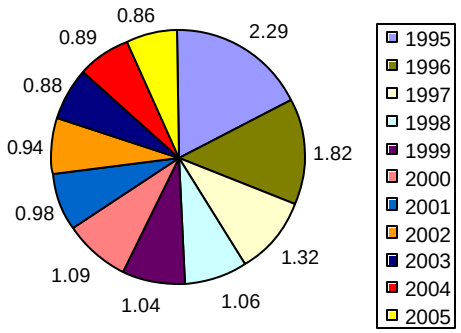
Graph 3

Residential Dispatch Rates



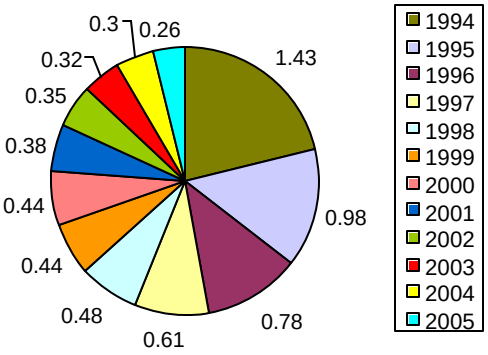
Graph 4

Commercial Dispatch Rate



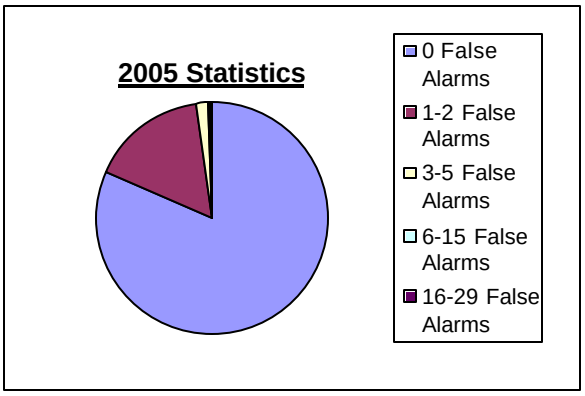
Graph 5

Combined Dispatch Rates



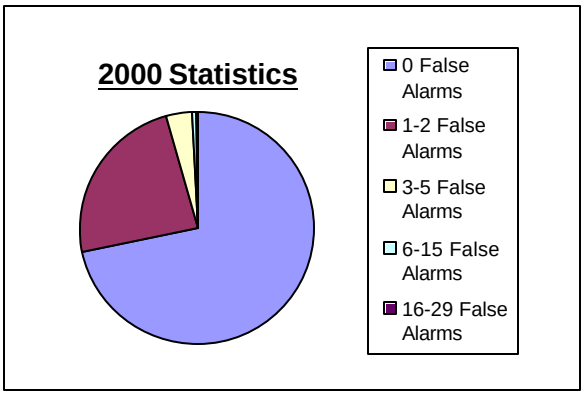
In 2005, an impressive 83.2% of all residential and commercial alarm users experienced no false alarms at all. **A total of 53,240 alarm users, had <u>zero</u> false alarm activations to which police officers responded in 2005.** The following pie graphs depict, in 5-year intervals, that more alarm users (as a percentage of total alarm users for a given year) are achieving the zero false alarm threshold. This statistic, which is supported by the low false dispatch rate, is indicative of the success of the overall false alarm reduction program. These reductions become more significant when viewed with the steady increase in the number of alarm users each year.

Threshold Statistics



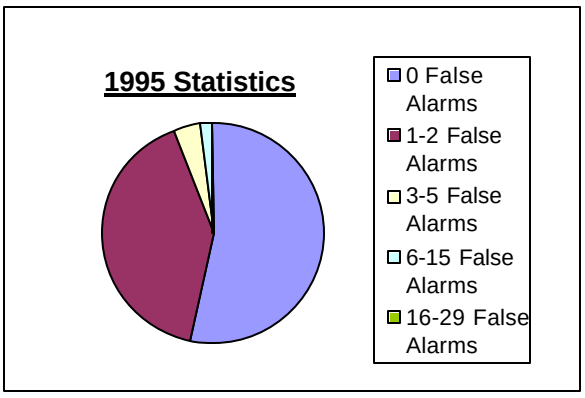
2005 Threshold Statistics	
False Alarms	Alarm Users
0	53,240
1-2	10,730
3-5	1,180
6-15	198
16-29	8

Total 2005 Alarm Users = 63,970



2000 Threshold Statistics	
False Alarms	Alarm Users
0	45,684
1-2	15,650
3-5	2,378
6-15	362
16-29	14

Total 2000 Alarm Users = 61,334



1995 Threshold Statistics	
False Alarms	Alarm Users
0	20,468
1-2	15,968
3-5	1,559
6-15	618
16-29	19

Total 1995 Alarm Users = 36,436

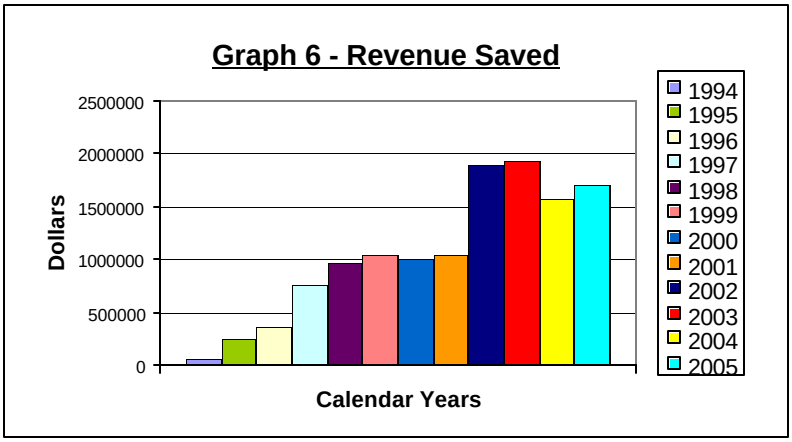
As a direct result of the FARS's strict enforcement of the alarm law, there were 18,986 alarm calls to which police officers were not required to respond in 2005. **This equates to savings in 2005 of approximately $1,708,740 and 12,657 hours of police officer time, or 12.17 police work years.** (Monetary savings are based on a cost of $90 per response. Work year savings are based on an average of 20

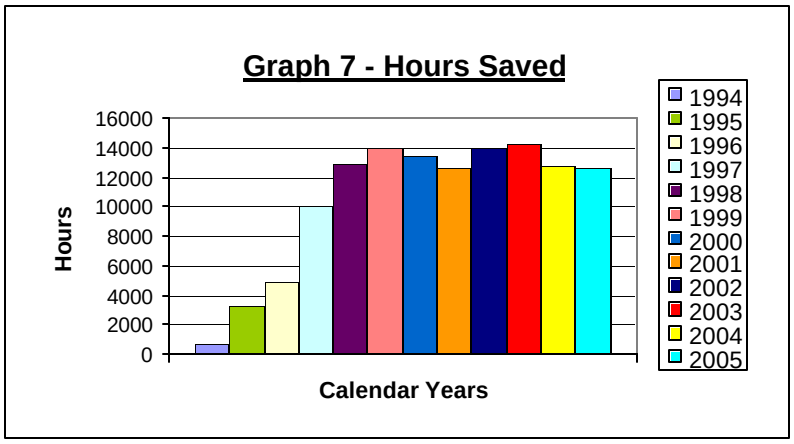
minutes per alarm response by two officers.) This timesaving is substantial, particularly when the department is being asked to do more with less each year.

The following graphs illustrate the revenues, hours and work years saved as a result of the false alarm reduction program.

Graph 6 shows that the actual revenue saved in 2005 as a result of police officers responding to 18,986 less false alarms was $1,708,740. Since the FARS began enforcement of the alarm statute, the total revenue saved by Montgomery County has been $12,596,050.

(The dramatic difference in 2002 savings and subsequent years is due to using a more realistic figure of $90 per response, as opposed to $55 in 2001 and $50 for previous years.)

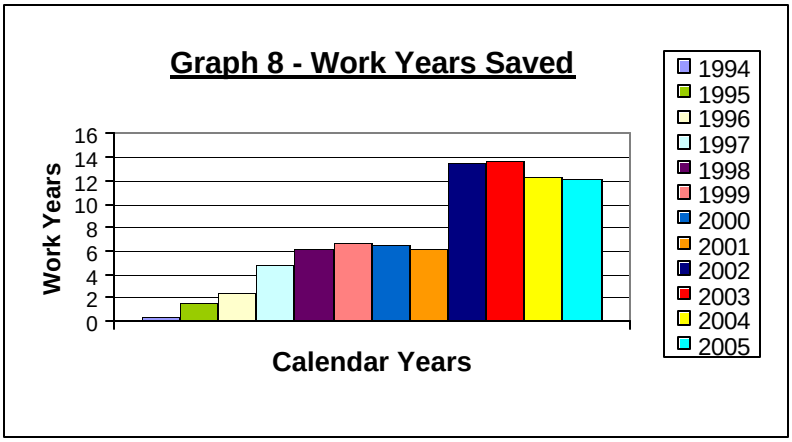




Graph 7 shows that the actual hours saved in 2005 as a result of police officers responding to 18,986 less false alarms was 12,657 hours. Since the FARS began enforcement of the alarm statute, Montgomery County has recovered 125,694 hours in police officer time.

Graph 8 shows that 12.17 actual work years were saved in 2005 as a result of enforcement of the alarm statute. Since enforcement began, Montgomery County has recovered a total of 86.29 work years of police officer time.

(The dramatic difference starting in 2002 vs. previous years is due to erroneously using a full 2080 hours as a work year measure between 1994 and 2001, which is not an accurate figure.)



The total savings in dollars, hours and work years since 1994 have been significant and are depicted in Chart 3 below. As stated previously in this report, absent strict enforcement of the alarm statute, Montgomery County would have **paid** more than $11,000,000 in 2005 alone responding to false alarms. The $12,596,050 savings to the county is, therefore, even more significant.

Chart 3 – Cumulative Savings

Year	Revenue Saved	Hours Saved	Work Years Saved
1994	$ 55,750	743	.35
1995	$ 242,750	3,236	1.56
1996	$ 366,950	4,892	2.35
1997	$ 752,850	10,038	4.82
1998	$ 968,550	12,914	6.21
1999	$1,046,600	13,954	6.71
2000	$1,008,600	13,448	6.47
2001	$1,046,430	12,684	6.10
2002	$1,895,760	14,043	13.5
2003	$1,928,790	14,301	13.75
2004	$1,574,280	12,794	12.30
2005	$1,708,740	12,657	12.17
TOTAL	**$12,596,050**	**125,694**	**86.29**

Government Alarm Users

In calendar year 2005, the FARS had 545 registered federal, state and local government facilities, up from 515 in 2004, and all of which were held to the same strict standards as all other alarm users. Of the 545 government alarm users, 121 or 22.3%, had at least one false alarm. This shows a substantial decrease of 9% over 2004. Those 121 alarm users collectively had 297 false alarms. A total of 424 different government alarm users (77.8%) had **zero** false alarms, which is up from 68.8% in 2004 and shows positive movement toward false alarm reduction for most government alarm users.

Chart 4 shows 16 different government alarm users had five or more false alarms in 2005. With the exception of the one alarm user, who had nine false alarms, all of the rest came from one particular type of federal facility, which has multiple locations throughout Montgomery County. The FARS staff will be working with these government alarm users over the next year to identify the problems and suggest solutions that can be implemented to reduce or eliminate false alarms from these facilities.

Chart 4 – Government Alarm Users

# of False Alarms	# of Alarm Users - 1999	# of Alarm Users – 2000	# of Alarm Users - 2001	# of Alarm Users - 2002	# of Alarm Users - 2003	# of Alarm Users - 2004	# of Alarm Users – 2005
0	332	355	355	404	400	354	424
1	72	54	50	69	74	94	71
2	22	17	33	22	17	34	24
3	13	14	5	10	2	12	7
4	2	7	4	3	3	9	3
5	1	1	2	0	0	3	3
6	0	1	1	3	1	3	2
7	1	0	2	2	0	3	3
8	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
9	1	2	0	2	0	1	1
10-13	1	0	0	1	0	2	4
14-21	0	0	1	0	0	0	3

Chart 4 is different from Charts 10-12, which appear later in this report, in that the number of alarm users at each threshold level is **not** included in the preceding level. For example, the chart reflects that 71 government alarm users had one false alarm and 24 government alarm users had two false alarms. The 24 at the two threshold are **not** included in the 71 count for one false alarm. Another way to view this report is that 71 government alarm users had one and only one false alarm. An additional 24 government alarm users had two and only two false alarms. An additional seven government alarm users had three and only three false alarms and so on. Adding up the 2005 column will show the total number of government alarm users at 545.

Revenue

The following two charts reflect revenue collected by the FARS for alarm user registration and renewal fees, false alarm response fees, alarm business license and administrative fees, civil citations and appeal filing fees. The first chart covers *calendar* year 2005. The second chart covers *fiscal* year 05. The FY05 chart is included only as a reference, because budget projections are based on fiscal rather than calendar years. The more accurate chart is the calendar year 2005 chart, as false alarms and the resultant false alarm response fees, are calculated on a calendar year basis.

Chart 5 – Calendar Year Revenue

CALENDAR YEAR 2005	ACTUAL REVENUES
Alarm User Registration Fees	
Residential	$164,310
Commercial	26,190
TOTAL	**$190,500**
Alarm User Registration Renewal Fees	
Residential	$216,237
Commercial	32,390
TOTAL	**$248,627**
False Alarm Response Fees	
Residential	$ 78,996
County Attorney Collections	16,000
Total Residential	**$ 94,996**
Commercial	$325,062
County Attorney Collections	98,882
Total Commercial	**$423,944**
TOTAL	**$518,940**
Alarm Business Fees	
License	$ 74,145
Civil Citations	11,250
Administrative Fees	1,232
TOTAL	**$ 86,627**
Appeal Filing Fees	
Residential	$ 660
Commercial	165
TOTAL	**$ 825**
GRAND TOTAL	**$1,045,519**

Chart 6 – Fiscal Year Revenue

FISCAL YEAR 05	ACTUAL REVENUES
Alarm User Registration Fees	
Residential	$165,600
Commercial	27,870
TOTAL	**$193,470**
Alarm User Registration Renewal Fees	
Residential	$214,625
Commercial	27,060
TOTAL	**$241,685**
False Alarm Response Fees	
Residential	$ 88,985
County Attorney Collections	13,210
Total Residential	**$102,195**
Commercial	$356,429
County Attorney Collections	72,185
Total Commercial	**$428,614**
TOTAL	**$530,809**
Alarm Business Fees	
License	$ 73,035
Civil Citations	16,250
Administrative Fees	850
TOTAL	**$ 90,135**
Appeal Filing Fees	
Residential	$ 810
Commercial	180
TOTAL	**$ 990**
GRAND TOTAL	**$1,057,089**

Collection of false alarm response fees is always a priority for the FARS. Strict enforcement of this aspect of the alarm law clearly shows that Montgomery County is serious about false alarms. **The FARS collection rate in 2005 was an extraordinary 91.0% of all false alarm response fees billed**. This is up slightly from last years collection figure of 90.5%. The suspension of police response provision in Chapter 3A, Alarms, for failure to remit false alarm response fees greatly enhances the FARS's ability to collect on unpaid bills.

The following chart reflects the amount billed for false alarm response fees in 2005 versus the amount collected for both residential and commercial alarm users. Please note that the "collected" amount in the following chart reflects payments made against false alarms that occurred in 2005. The actual collection of monies for those calendar year 2005 false alarms extended into calendar year 2006, and, therefore, reflects different totals from the Calendar Year Revenue Chart.

Chart 7 – Calendar Year 2005 Billed vs. Collected
False Alarm Response Fees

False Alarm Response Fees	Billed	Collected*	Past Due (>30 & <60 days overdue)	Delinquent (>50 days overdue)
Commercial	$402,825	$367,725	$24,225	$10,875
Residential	$83,925	$74,975	$2,975	$5,775
Total	**$486,750**	**$442,700**	**$27,200**	**$16,650**

*Represents fees collected in 2005 and 2006 against false alarm response fees billed in 2005.

The FARS is in the process of attempting to collect the past due amounts listed above. The FARS has sent overdue notices to all affected alarm users. The $16,650 listed above has been referred to the Office of the County Attorney for collection and the affected alarm users have been placed in a non-response status until payment is received.

General Statistics

Chart 8 shows false alarm reduction statistics from 1994, when the new alarm law was in effect but false alarm response fees were not yet being imposed, through 2005. The chart shows the actual number of requests for dispatch, the number of calls that were ultimately dispatched and to which response was made, requests where no response was required or was refused, verified calls and the percentage of false alarm reduction. Verified calls include actual criminal activity, as well as suspicious situations such as an open door with no other evidence of criminal activity. Circumstances under which no response may occur include cancellation of response by the alarm company, duplicate calls for the same alarm activation, blanket cancellations by supervisory police personnel and refusals where the alarm company or alarm user was in a violation status.

Chart 8 – False Alarm Reduction

Year	Requests for Dispatch	Dispatched	No Response	Verified Calls	% Reduction	% Reduction From Base
1994	43,936	42,821	1,115*			
1995	40,967	35,624	4,855	488	-16.8%	-15.7%
1996	40,534	32,390	7,339	805	-9.1%	-24.3%
1997	45,791	29,219	15,057	1,515	-9.8%	-32.0%
1998	46,839	25,877	19,371	1,591	-11.4%	-39.6%
1999	48,434	25,951	20,932	1,551	+003%	-39.4%
2000	48,603	26,877	20,172	1,554	+.035%	-37.2%
2001	45,702	24,855	19,026	1,821	-7.5%	-41.9%
2002	46,409	23,402	21,064	1,943	-5.8%	-45.3%
2003	44,673	21,452	21,431	1,790	-8.3%	-49.9%
2004	38,248	19,190	17,492	1,566	-10.5%	-55.2%
2005	36,998	16,443	18,986	1,569	-14.3%	-61.6%

*Does not include dispatch vs. non-dispatch or verified calls for January, February or March, 1994, as statistics for those months are not available.

Chart 9 reflects the number of alarm users each year since 1994. Alarm user registrations have more than doubled since implementation and enforcement of the false alarm reduction program began in 1994. The FARS received 6,245 new alarm user registration forms in 2005. This increase, coupled with the 61.6% decrease in alarm activations to which police officers must respond each year, is truly remarkable. The success and results of this program are what make it a model for other municipalities across the country.

Chart 9 – Alarm Users

Year	Residential	Commercial	Combined
1994	N/A	N/A	29,756
1995	39,398	7,049	36,436
1996	34,048	8,102	42,150
1997	39,192	8,879	48,008
1998	44,827	9,348	54,175
1999	48,654	9,489	58,143
2000	51,743	9,591	61,334
2001	55,024	9,812	64,836
2002	57,026	9,499	66,525
2003	57,223	9,241	66,474
2004	54,960	8,788	63,748
2005	55,095	8,875	63,970

Chart 9 does not reflect an increase of overall alarm users by 6,245 (the number of new registered alarm users), because some alarm users each year move out of the area or remove their alarm systems and are no longer required to have an alarm user registration. Additionally, with alarm user registration renewal, the FARS is much better able to keep the alarm user database current by removing those alarm users, who no longer have an alarm system or have moved. This allows the FARS to perform statistical analysis using more accurate numbers, which provides for more meaningful and accurate reporting.

The following charts depict the number of alarm users that had a specific number of false alarms from 1995 through 2005 for select years. The charts also show the percentage of change between 2004 vs. 2005, as well as the percentage of change between the base year of 1995 and 2005, which shows the reduction of false alarms since inception of the program. Chart 10 shows residential alarm users. Chart 11 shows commercial alarm users, and Chart 12 reflects total alarm users (both residential and commercial combined).

In 2005, 53,240 alarm users had ZERO false alarms to which police officers were required to respond. This represents 83.2% of all alarm users, which is up from 2004 statistics where 80.7% of alarm users had zero false alarms. Therefore, the most compelling statistic in these charts is in the number of alarm users that appear on the 0 row (meaning they have had no false alarms for the entire calendar year).

Charts 10-12 are calculated slightly different from the commensurate Chart 4, which reflects government alarm users only. The total number of alarm users for each category will be reflected in the zero and one false alarm rows. Those alarm users, who had two false alarms are included in the number that had one false alarm. Those alarm users with three false alarms, are included in the number that had two and one false alarms respectively. For example, Chart 10 shows that 47,510 alarm users had zero false alarms and 7,585 alarm users had one false alarm. Those two lines add up to the total number of residential alarm users (55,095). Looking further,

of the 7,585 alarm users, who had one false alarm, 1,392 *of those alarm users* went on to have a second false alarm. Of those 1,392, alarm users, 327 went on to have a third false alarm. The column proceeds in the same fashion through the eighth false alarm, which is the last threshold for residential alarm users.

The number of residential alarm users, who had no false alarms from 2004 to 2005, rose by 3.1%. As a percentage of the total, 86.2% of residential alarm users had no false alarms in 2005, which reflects an actual increase of 2.3% over 2004. Keep in mind that when viewing any of the statistical data in this report, it is important to look at those numbers in relation to the total number of alarm users. Since 1995, 162.2% more residential alarm users were able to remain within the zero false alarm threshold.

Chart 10
Residential Alarm Users
With Specific Numbers of False Alarms

# of False Alarms	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2004	2005	% Change (04-05)	% Base Change (95-05)
0	18116	28428	37,384	44,044	47,130	46098	47510	+3.1%	+162.2%
1	11271	10701	11,270	10,980	10,103	8862	7585	-14.4%	-32.7%
2	4153	3516	3,292	2,950	2,306	1840	1392	-24.3%	-66.5%
3	1171	371	985	793	565	421	327	-22.3%	-72.1%
4	668	333	261	217	143	98	99	+.01%	-85.2%
5	292	106	89	68	38	22	30	+36.4%	-89.7%
6	128	32	32	21	14	5	12	+58.3%	-90.6%
7	50	13	10	7	9	3	3	0	-94.0%
8	19	5	2	4	5	2	1	-50.0%	-94.7%
9	9	1	2	1	2	1	0	-100%	-100%
10	7	0	1	0	1	1	0	-100%	-100%
11	6	0	1	0	0	1	0	-100%	-100%
12	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
13	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
14	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
15	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
16	1	0	1	0		0	0	0	-100%

In 1995, one residential alarm users had 16 separate false alarms. In 2005, the highest number of false alarms by a single residential alarm user was eight, which reflects a 50% decrease in the threshold alarms for residential alarm users. This number is significant as it means officers are responding to the same residential location fewer times, thereby increasing officer safety and decreasing complacency issues.

The number of commercial alarm users, who had no false alarms from 2004 to 2005, rose by a significant 6.5%. As a percentage of the total, 64.6% of commercial alarm users had no false alarms in 2005, which is up from 61% in 2004. Keep in mind that when viewing any of the statistical data in this report, it is important to look at those numbers in relation to the total number of alarm users. Since 1995, 143.6% more commercial alarm users were able to remain within the zero false alarm threshold.

Chart 11
Commercial Alarm Users With Specific Numbers of False Alarms

# of False Alarms	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2004	2005	% Change (04-05)	% Base Change (95-05)
0	2352	4820	5416	5906	5632	5356	5730	+6.5%	+143.6%
1	4697	4059	4073	3906	3609	3432	3145	-8.4%	-33.0%
2	2699	2457	2334	2256	1864	1730	1502	-13.2%	-35.9%
3	1435	837	1347	1299	1014	957	853	-10.9%	-40.5%
4	1113	770	781	744	570	560	473	-15.5%	-57.5%
5	763	445	475	459	359	360	305	-15.3%	-60.0%
6	490	292	287	285	228	239	186	-22.2%	-62.0%
7	331	177	176	185	139	158	121	-23.4%	-63.4%
8	217	123	112	125	98	108	85	-21.3%	-60.8%
9	145	80	80	85	76	68	63	-7.3%	-56.5%
10	109	67	58	48	48	48	43	-10.4%	-60.5%
11	75	45	42	35	28	35	30	-14.3%	-60.0%
12	49	32	28	25	20	23	21	-8.7%	-57.1%
13	35	17	18	22	12	14	16	+14.3	-54.3%
14	30	11	13	18	7	8	13	+62.5%	-56.7%
15	24	8	10	11	5	7	8	+14.3%	-66.7%
16	18	5	5	9	4	5	8	+60.0%	-55.5%
17	11	5	1	8	3	5	7	+40.0%	-36.4%
18	11	3	0	7	3	4	6	+50.0%	-45.4%
19	8	1	0	4	2	2	6	+200%	-25.0%
20	5	1	0	3	1	2	4	+100%	-20.0%
21	5	1	0	2	0	1	1	0	-100%
22	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	-100%	-100%
23	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	-100%	-100%
24	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
25	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
26	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
27	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
28	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
29	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%

The total number of alarm users, who had no false alarms from 2004 to 2005, rose by 3.5%. As a percentage of the total, a full 83.2% of residential and commercial alarm users combined had no false alarms in 2005, which reflects an actual increase of 2.5% over 2004. Keep in mind that when viewing any of the statistical data in this report, it is important to look at those numbers in relation to the total number of alarm users. Since 1995, 160.1% more residential and commercial alarm users combined are able to remain within the zero false alarm threshold.

Chart 12
Both Residential and Commercial Alarm Users With Specific Numbers of False Alarms

# of False Alarms	1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2004	2005	% Change (04-05)	% Base Change (95-05)
0	20468	33248	42800	49950	52762	51454	53240	+3.5%	+160.1%
1	15968	14760	15343	14886	13712	12294	10730	-7.7%	-32.8%
2	6852	5973	5626	5206	4170	3470	2894	-16.6%	-57.8%
3	2606	1208	2332	2092	1579	1378	1180	-14.4%	-54.7%
4	1781	1103	1042	991	713	658	572	-13.1%	-67.9%
5	1055	551	564	527	397	382	335	-12.3%	-68.2%
6	618	324	319	306	242	244	198	-18.8%	-68.0%
7	381	190	186	192	148	161	124	-23.0%	-67.4%
8	236	128	114	129	103	110	86	-21.8%	-63.5%
9	154	81	82	86	78	69	63	-7.3%	-56.5%
10	116	67	59	48	49	49	43	-10.4%	-60.5%
11	81	45	43	35	28	36	30	-14.3%	-60.0%
12	52	32	29	25	20	23	21	-8.7%	-57.1%
13	36	17	19	22	12	14	16	+14.3	-54.3%
14	32	11	14	18	7	8	13	+62.5%	-56.7%
15	26	8	11	11	5	7	8	+14.3%	-66.7%
16	19	5	6	9	4	5	8	+60.0%	-55.5%
17	11	5	1	8	3	5	7	+40.0%	-36.4%
18	11	3	0	7	3	4	6	+50.0%	-45.4%
19	8	1	0	4	2	2	6	+200%	-25.0%
20	5	1	0	3	1	2	4	+100%	-20.0%
21	5	1	0	2	0	1	1	0	-100%
22	4	1	0	0	0	1	0	-100%	-100%
23	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	-100%	-100%
24	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
25	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
26	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
27	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
28	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%
29	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-100%

Major Accomplishments

Community Outreach Initiatives

In an effort to better get the message out about the drain on resources and officer safety issues involved with responding to false alarms, the False Alarm Reduction Section took its message to the masses in 2005. FARS staff spoke with hundreds of citizens at the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair in August and handed out trinkets for kids and adults alike featuring the universal "No False Alarms" symbol. Pamphlets on false alarm prevention for residences, businesses and banks were handed out, as well as one-page bulletins on avoiding false alarms from such causes as inclement weather, home remodeling, and what to do if you forget your password.

FARS staff also manned booths at both the Bethesda and Rockville district station open house events, where they talked about the importance of using alarm systems responsibly, answered questions from concerned citizens and explained how false alarms are detrimental to the entire community. The balsa airplanes, punching bags and letter openers FARS staff provided to those who stopped by the booth were a big hit.

The FARS Director was a featured speaker before the Police Department's Citizen's Academy Alumni Association, where she engaged the members in a lively discussion of the mandates of Montgomery County's Alarm Law, what steps have been taken to reduce false alarms, how those steps have been successful, false alarm causes and solutions and how technology plays a part in alarm management programs. There was a wonderful exchange during the question and answer period, and it was obvious that the members cared deeply about the impact of false alarms on both police officers and the general public.

Training

Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

Every year the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) conducts a Private Security Services Conference for those individuals and companies engaged in professions for which the DCJS is responsible for licensing. This includes such professions as electronic security technicians and salespersons, central station dispatchers, alarm respondents and security officers, to name a few. FARS Director, Norma Beaubien, was invited to conduct a class on how the electronic security business can reduce false alarms. Ms. Beaubien teamed up with Howard Simons, President of the Maryland Burglar and Fire Alarm Association, and presented a course entitled, "False Alarms: The Problems and Solutions." The course included information on the scope of the problem, what it costs public safety and the alarm industry alike, the causes of false alarms, benefits of an alarm management program, cooperative efforts, education and best practices, among others.

Ms. Beaubien was invited to provide training based on her nationwide exposure and recognized expertise in the field of public safety alarm management programs, as well as the proven success of the Montgomery County model. According to Kim Buckner, Training Manager, DCJS, "This event was a true success with extremely positive feedback from our attendees…We appreciate your energy, talent and time in making this Conference our best yet."

FARA Regional Training – Beltsville, Maryland and Dallas, Texas

As members of the False Alarm Reduction Association (FARA), FARS staff have the opportunity to work with members of the law enforcement community on an international basis. One of the most recent, and perhaps most significant, endeavors of the FARA was to create a regional training program, where certified instructors would travel throughout North America to provide training on the "nuts and bolts" of alarm management programs. FARS Director, Norma Beaubien, has been certified as one of the instructors for this intensive 2-day training course, and helped to co-author the entire program. Ms. Beaubien conducted two extremely successful training courses in Beltsville, Maryland and Dallas, Texas in 2005. The Beltsville class brought together law enforcement from agencies throughout Maryland. More importantly, however, was the participation of alarm industry professionals, who now have a much better understanding of what false alarms mean to public safety and what their role should be in ensuring that false alarms are reduced or eliminated.

The interactive training course includes information for those just starting to enact false alarm reduction programs, as well as those seasoned veterans, who have been involved in the false alarm issue for years. The course includes modules on evaluating the extent of the problem; justification for developing a false alarm reduction program; causes and solutions; benefits of alarm management; design, adoption, implementation and funding of a program; communication; and evaluation. One Dallas alarm industry participant stated, "I run a small company, and I was only planning on attending the first day of training. However, the course was so good and the materials so relevant, that I had to come back for the second day."

The Montgomery County false alarm reduction program is featured throughout the training course as one approach to managing false alarms, which has shown extraordinary results. The goal of the training is to provide law enforcement and the industry with a forum to develop positive working relationships and gain a greater understanding of what is possible.

Emergency Communications Center

The first point of contact with the Police Department when attempting to request dispatch to an alarm activation is with the Emergency Communications Center (ECC). While police officers only responded to 16, 443 requests for dispatch in 2005, the ECC telecommunicators and dispatchers handled all 36,998 attempts to dispatch. It is critical that ECC personnel obtain specific training to handle these types of calls and gain a greater understanding of why we do what we do and how it will impact them in their new positions. For the past five years, FARS staff have provided specialized training to all new ECC recruits as part of their overall training. The training includes an overview of the alarm law and executive regulation, why the law and

regulation were enacted, the scope of the problem, ECC and FARS standard operating procedures, review of actual calls and what was done correctly or incorrectly, and discussion of the successes of the false alarm reduction program. All current FARS staff have served as trainers for the ECC recruit classes, and found them to be extremely worthwhile in helping to ensure a cohesive approach within the Police Department to the alarm management issue.

Institute for Law and Justice Study

The Alarm Industry Research and Educational Foundation (AIREF) commissioned the Institute for Law and Justice (ILJ) to provide an independent study on the issue of alarm management and provide a report on the most effective measures taken to reduce or eliminate false alarms. Due to the huge success of its program, Montgomery County was invited to be a part of that study and represents one of four jurisdictions evaluated. FARS staff met with ILJ staff on several occasions in 2005 and provided information on how Montgomery County's false alarm reduction program has evolved over the years and what makes it successful. The final report is not due out until mid-2006, but we look for Montgomery County to be featured as a jurisdiction, which has been proactive in addressing the issue, provides a strong, well-written and enforced alarm law, and implements initiatives that are extremely successful in the reduction and/or elimination of false alarms to which police officers respond.

Enforcement

FARS staff continued its efforts to garner greater compliance by alarm companies through the issuance of Class A civil citations for violations of Chapter 3A, Alarms. A total of 31 civil citations were issued for failure to cease requesting dispatch on customers in a violation status and not providing the legally mandated information when requesting dispatch. Twenty-four of the 31 total citations were issued to one national company. Each year, we are required to issue fewer and fewer civil citations to ensure compliance with the alarm law, which demonstrates a positive movement toward conformity. The number of citations required in 2005 for violations was down again from 106 in 2001, 87 in 2002, 49 in 2003, and 48 in 2004. This shows that most alarm companies are complying with the provisions of the alarm law, and our goal is to have zero circumstances in which the imposition of civil citations are necessary.

Collection Efforts

When an alarm user fails to pay a false alarm response fee, the FARS advises the alarm user's alarm company that it may no longer request dispatch for that user and refers the account to the Office of the County Attorney for collection action. In 2005, the FARS referred 489 different alarm user accounts to the Office of the County Attorney for collection of outstanding/ delinquent fees that totaled $124,604.

Additionally, the Office of the County Attorney files suit in District Court against those alarm users, who do not pay their response fees despite both the FARS and the County Attorney's Office best collection efforts. A total of 186 suits were filed in District Court in 2005, with 161 of those alarm users paying all fees due prior to the trial date.

Public Relations

Once again, the Montgomery County FARS performed outreach to our citizens and business community, to the alarm industry and to other jurisdictions to assist with false alarm reduction efforts. Montgomery County's false alarm reduction program was featured in many news media outlets. Following is a list of some of those outlets and the questions and/or concerns addressed:

- *Access Control and Security Systems Magazine* – false alarm prevention for commercial establishments
- *Washington Post* – fees and/or fines charged to residential alarm users as a comparison for Howard's County's new alarm law
- *Baltimore Sun* – Montgomery County's alarm law and its success
- Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies – licensing of alarm businesses; pros and cons of state vs. local licensing
- *Security Systems News Magazine* – low dispatch rates in Montgomery County and how that was achieved, as well as alarm ordinances in general
- *ABC News 20/20* – success in false alarm reduction
- *Security Sales and Integration Magazine* – feature article where Montgomery County FARS Director, Norma Beaubien, was selected as an expert in the field of alarm management to speak out on false alarm prevention, the role of the alarm industry, verified response measures, enhanced call verification, and trends for the future
- *The Capital* – looking at Anne Arundel County's attempts to enact a local alarm ordinance and discussion on how Montgomery County is thriving in this area

Montgomery's Best Honor Awards Program

FARS Director, Norma Beaubien, was honored for her long and consistent dedication to reducing false alarms in Montgomery County by receiving the Exceptional Service Award at Montgomery's Best Honor Awards Program in 2005. The Award for Exceptional Service is the highest level of County recognition for outstanding government service and exemplary support of County or department programs. Her nomination stated, in part, "Her efforts in effectively managing this program has greatly supported the Police Department's mission to safeguard life and property, preserve the peace, prevent and detect crime, enforce the law, and protect the rights of citizens…The County is safer and more peaceful as a result of her commitment to excellence in public service."